



Cancer Institute

at Hartford Hospital

Testimony

Appropriations Committee

SB 399

3/21/2022

Andrew L. Salner, MD

Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thanks for the opportunity to express my thoughts concerning SB 399. I am Director of the Helen & Harry Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital, one of Connecticut's largest cancer centers. I am a practicing oncologist and cancer researcher. Academically, I hold the rank of Clinical Professor at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. I have had the privilege of serving as a volunteer on Connecticut's Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board for many years. I am also a long time volunteer for the American Cancer Society.

I would like to encourage the passage of SB 399, amended to include full \$12 million funding. We have a unique opportunity, given the state's more favorable financial situation, to impact the lives of many of our residents, and we can't afford to squander that opportunity. Despite the fact that the prevalence of cigarette use has decreased substantially to approximately 12% in our state, tobacco use overall has actually increased. Approximately 28% of our high school youth use e-cigarettes, and many are addicted to nicotine. One juul e-cigarette contains the nicotine of an entire pack of regular cigarettes. We are creating an entire new generation of tobacco users, and evidence suggests e-cigarettes are a gateway to use of cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products.

Although we have thankfully seen the lung cancer mortality rate decrease due both to decreased cigarette use and improvements in therapy, tobacco still accounts for 25% of all cancer deaths and a large amount of mortality from heart, lung, and vascular disease as well. Tobacco related illness impacts our families and communities and also has substantial health care related costs to our state.

We receive \$473 million in tobacco related settlement and tax dollars annually, yet we spend a woeful amount on evidence based tobacco prevention and cessation programs. We, like all other states, are ranked annually by the American Lung Association for our efforts at battling tobacco related health issues. We received an F again this year for our poor investment in our youth, in the health of our state residents, and for an investment that pays dividends. While the CDC recommends that Connecticut, based on its population characteristics, invest \$32 million in tobacco related programs, I would recommend we at least fund the full \$12 million this year. Data from many other states including Washington, California, Oregon, Alaska and Maine demonstrates substantial improvements in tobacco outcomes with this appropriate investment. There is a 1.4-3 times return in investment fiscally with long term funding of prevention and cessation programs.

Comprehensive tobacco control programs establish smoke-free policies and social norms, promote tobacco cessation and support those trying to quit, prevent initiation of tobacco use among prospective new users including youth and reduce tobacco-related health disparities among disparate populations.

Tobacco use continues to be the most preventable cause of illness in our society today, and the large number of youth using e-cigarettes pose a major threat to our future health. Please support SB 399 with full \$12 million funding so that Connecticut can get a passing grade and we can show that when offered the opportunity, we did the right thing for our kids and for all of our residents.

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